

Unapproved
REGULAR MEETING
June 1, 2015

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, June 1, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Hemmann, Kotkin, Martino, Manousos, Rell, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Barry, and Chairperson Montinieri.

Absent: Councilor Hurley.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk; Kathy Bagley, Director, Social & Youth Services; Fred Bushey, Director, BOE Director of Maintenance and Operations.

Councilor Martino led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Mayor Montinieri asked Dan Silver to come up to share his thoughts and introduce the members of the Charter Revision Commission.

Dan Silver, 23 Orchard Brook Drive, came up to speak as Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission. He, along with the other members, was appointed by the Town Council in December 2013. He recognized and thanked the members of the Commission: Steve Kirsch, Chief McAuliffe, Chief Knapp, Mary Pelletier, and Mike Zaleski. The first action of the Commission was a public hearing held in January 2014 and from then on the Commission met twice a month for 11 months. They listened to the public and fully discussed every issue. The Commission made some proposals, but most were clean-up of things in the charter, for example, dog catcher [Charter: dog warden ref.].

Mayor Montinieri thanked the Commission and Dan Silver for his leadership on the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Caruk, 149 Broad Street, said the revisions to the Ethics Board fall short. The Stacey Hodges case cost the town over \$600,000 in legal fees. The revisions to the Charter do not prevent this kind of thing from happening again; censure and encouraging someone to resign does not work. In the Hodges case, the Board of Ethics hired an attorney who found that there was an appearance of impropriety but could not prove wrongdoing. The ‘appearance of impropriety’ is a standard that an Ethics Committee cannot judge because it is too subjective. He suggested that before we consider an Ethics violation, we should have the Town attorney decide whether it is worth pursuing so we don’t waste our time. We should get rid of the Board of Ethics or at least have some type of oversight because they failed; he does not want this to happen again.

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Paul Copp, 100 Executive Square, attended most of the Commission meetings, he congratulated the Council for the people they put on the Commission; they are the best and brightest. He did disagree with what the Commission did with the Ethics Committee; he thinks they didn't put any teeth into it. He suggested that all new collective bargaining agreements and employment agreements with the Town agree to be governed by the provisions of the Ethics Committee. In Town Council elections, people can only vote for 6 of the 9 open positions; this does not help petitioning candidates or the Independance party [Wethersfield only].

John Console, 38 Ivy Lane, commended the Commission for all the time and effort they put in. He thinks they did fall short on not putting in a strong-Mayor type of Government in which the Mayor runs for election, as other towns do. He thinks that residents should be able to vote on the budget before it's adopted by the Town Council.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, attended a number of Charter Revision Commission meetings as well and is disappointed. The town has gone through 10 years with problems that the prior charter revisions should have taken care of. Because of unfunded retirements the taxpayers have to put extra money into retirement every year. This Commission did not address these problems either. The Building Committee had overcharged the State by \$1.2 million and we now owe a \$680,000 charge back. This should never have happened and the Charter Revision should have looked at how to stop that from happening again. Grammar errors should have been corrected. The Commission should have looked at the New York law that prevents an increase in taxes. He would like the Council to bring in a new group of people to look at these outstanding issues. He would like to have budget referendums. Transparency should be put into the Charter so we can see the day to day financials of the Town. He thinks nepotism is acceptable in Wethersfield.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, attended a few of the Commission meetings early on. The package looked nice, is easy to understand, he hopes this is not the only opportunity for the citizens to address this issue. Believes there should be a referendum on the budget. He is supportive of term limits for the Town Council. He thinks 8 years is long enough, this also applies to people on various Boards and Commissions. Thinks 12 days for a referendum is unreasonable. In the Manager's and Town Clerk's job description the term 'indefinite term' is included and doesn't understand that language is there. Somewhere within the framework of the Charter accountability and responsibility should be addressed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

PUBLIC

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, said he has 2008 email from Police Officer Andrew Powers to Bonnie Therrien that stop signs should not be placed to control speed. Does not know why Orchard Street has a stop sign with half the amount of cars that Morrison Avenue has. He

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read an email from Mike Turner from February 2010 that stated a survey crew measured the sight distance from Tifton Road west to Morrison at 340 feet which DOT says is sufficient for a road speed of 30-35 mph. When the intersection was relocated the sight distance went from 340 ft. to 240 ft. He read from an email from Town Manager that stated from January 1, 2009 - June 18, 2012 there were no accidents reported at the intersections of Tifton and Morrison or Hillcrest and Orchard. He asked why they did the reports at Hillcrest and Orchard if the stop signs were not going to be removed. He also stated that he reported to the Town that the sidewalk contractor they hired was not doing the right job but he was allowed to continue; now the sidewalks need to be corrected. The Town has not improved the intersection at all; it went from sight distance of 340 feet to 232 feet. The sidewalk width should be 2 feet wider than normal because it is adjacent to the road and made of granite or concrete instead of bituminous. The kids cross the Silas Deane at the worst location due to the lowered sight distance.

John Console, 38 Ivy Lane, wanted to address Council comments in newspapers from May 9th, May 14th and May 13th. In Rocky Hill budget adopted with no tax increase. He stated that, on his home he has paid \$99,509.13 for the board of education budget alone. He does not have children, but he is not complaining about that. He expects a new road on Ivy Lane. When street sweeping came through his street last week, it ripped up 1/8th of the road leaving debris everywhere. The manhole is also loose and breaking apart. He and the other residents of Ivy Lane deserve and expect a new road and would like to know what the Town Council can do about it. He said the blight enforcement person needs to get in a car and go around Town to see that blight rules aren't being followed everywhere and the north end of Wethersfield is starting to look like the south end of Hartford.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, said the 3.71% increase is too high for this economy. Rocky Hill had no tax increase, Southington had .78% increase, Middletown .1% increase, Plainville .45% increase, Farmington 2.7% increase, Newington 3.2% increase, Simsbury 1.1% increase. The way we do the budgets is wrong; they are designed to liquidate every dollar in the current year. Successful businesses take the actuals up until the current month and extrapolate what it's going to cost the rest of the year to see where they can reduce costs. His tax bill could pay rent somewhere. Home prices will be higher in lower taxed towns.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, asked the Town Council and Town Manager when will get around to doing something about the pond. For more than 10 years he and pond side neighbors have tried to deal with Town officials in a responsible, positive way. There was productive conversation 9 years ago and everyone thought something would happen. Thinks maybe he should take a more aggressive stance; he would like to feel that when he talks to paid officials in Town he is respected. The neighbors on Cloverdale Circle deserve certain things and their request is not an unreasonable expectation. He said a good manager provides direction to subordinate staff and suggested that this needs to happen here on a local level.

COUNCIL REPORTS

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Councilor Martino reported that the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission had their Senior Fair on May 24st. There was a great turnout with many speakers including Missy Morse the Crazy Coupon Lady, a speaker from Savers, Lindsay Gomes from Shoprite spoke on healthy shopping, and October Kitchens which served sample meals which they prepare and sell weekly to seniors.

Councilor Kotkin reported that the Library Board met. As people use more e-books, fewer books are donated to the Friends of the Library for the book sale which helps support programs for the Library Board. They are looking at different options such as a special preview night before the sale for a fee.

Councilor Kotkin reported that the Insurance Committee met and in April. Insurance claims are \$200,000 above budget and running a deficit this year. The Committee is trying to reduce claims long-term for those who have normal preventive care will pay less for their health insurance. Recently, 300 letters were sent out to families of the teacher's union letting them know their health care cost would be going up if they didn't do certain things by end of the year (e.g. annual exams). They have gotten some blowback from teachers and their families, but the Town and insurance agent are working through that.

Town Manager Bridges said that this healthy choice provision is currently in three Town contracts and will launch this summer. The other three Town contracts will follow. He expects there will be an adjustment period.

Councilor Roberts reported that the Shared Services Committee met on May 18th. They were updated on the merging of IT/Data Services between the Town and Board of Education. The Town Manager and Superintendent have been working on a memorandum of understanding. Meetings have been held with the unions, an organizational chart has been developed, and the plan is to go ahead as of July 1st. The Committee also started discussions about opportunities for efficiencies with the HR Superintendent and the Business Manager leaving. Getting IT up and running by July 1st is the focus right now but they did have a productive discussion on combining more services in the HR/business sectors.

Councilor Barry reported that the Building Committee met. They are gearing up for the summer months when the school is unoccupied. Work includes abatement, auditorium, pool, and finishing work being done on chemistry classrooms. The software issue with the elevator is being worked out. The reimbursement for the state has come through. The Committee is very aware of the costs and keeping the project within budget.

Councilor Hemmann reported there was a Shade Tree Committee public hearing on May 11th. Concerns by Hang Dog neighborhood residents on the trees on the islands were heard as well as discussion on cleanout of underbrush on the Old Common greens. She thinks residents were happier about what was going on after the discussion. Her understanding is that the work has been completed.

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COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Manousos thanked the Charter Revision Commission.

Councilor Barry also thanked the Charter Revision Commission; all their time and effort is appreciated.

Mayor Montinieri stated that a schedule needs be finalized and prepared to get it to referendum, if it's decided to do so. June 15th is the deadline to accept the report. He encouraged the Councilors to provide their feedback on the charter revision to the Town Manager before the next Council meeting.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Council has the ability to recommend additional changes that were not recommended by the Commission. Town Clerk Sassano said, at this point, the Council can only deal with what they have recommended; but can make changes within the topic areas the Commission changed.

Mayor Montinieri said there was great attendance at the Memorial Day Parade. 147 students received support through the Dollars for Scholars program. Several members of the community received recognition awards at the Salute to Business at the Country Club. He is waiting to hear from the Board of Education on the rain plans for High School graduation ceremony.

Mayor Montinieri reported that he was on Morison Avenue this past Friday at the request of a resident to observe traffic, road conditions. He found traffic speed and road conditions better than expected. He will share his thoughts with Mike Turner.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Bridges reported that the recommended practice for the invasive species at the pond is to cut it back repeatedly until it dies. Physical Services will take a look at this.

TOWN CLERK COMMUNICATIONS

Town Clerk Sassano reported that June is dog licensing month statewide; the Clerk's office licensed 66 dogs the first day. She received a letter from Rich Roberts, who could not be at the meeting, on the proposed charter revision changes. He thinks the changes are good and should be adopted with some of his own added revisions he would like the Council to consider. Councilors were given a copy of this letter earlier in the meeting.

COUNCIL ACTION

NONE FOR RESIGNATIONS OR APPOINTMENTS

NO ACTION TAKEN ON THE PUBLIC HEARING: WILL ACT ON JUNE 15.

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OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE AUTHORIZATION FOR JEFFREY K. BRIDGES, JR., TOWN MANAGER AND KATHY A. BAGLEY, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL AND YOUTH SERVICES TO MAKE, EXECUTE AND APPROVE, ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD A CONTACT BETWEEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND YOUTH SERVICES. SAID CONTRACT SHOULD BE IN THE AMOUNT UP TO \$27,837 FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROGRAM SERVICES WITHIN THE YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU FOR PHYSICAL YEARS 2015 TO 2017”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Kathy Bagley said that originally this grant was not included in the Governor’s budget but it looks like it is back in. The grant goes towards programs and salary support in the youth services department.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Mayor Montinieri said the Council received the report from the Charter Revision Commission; this will not be an action item. Councilor Kotkin said he prefers to have discussion of the charter revision at the June 15th Town Council meeting. Mayor Montinieri asked that Councilors have comments/recommendations to Town Manager Bridges in advance of the meeting for compilation. Councilor Hemmann said she would be away on business during the June 15th meeting, but would submit her comments ahead of time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

BIDS

Councilor Martino moved to **“ ACCEPT BID FROM ABIDE OF EAST LONGMEADOW, MA FOR THE HAZARDOUS MATERIAL ABATEMENT OF THE GYMNASIUM AND CAFETERIA FLOORING AT EMERSON WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR \$21,646 ”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Councilor Kotkin asked when the money for this was budgeted and what was the sum. Fred Bushey said this was budgeted for next fiscal year beginning July 1st; the amount was \$150,000. He said he received 3 or 4 bids from abatement and flooring contractors for different types of flooring.

Councilor Kotkin asked if it was the flooring or abatement that came in lower than expected. Fred Bushey said it was the abatement; he said they usually budget about \$6.50/sq. ft. for

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abatement, the lowest bidder came in at \$3.70 sq. ft.

Councilor Kotkin asked for clarification if this bid is for the gym and the cafeteria. Mr. Bushey answered yes.

Councilor Hemmann asked why the estimate was twice as much as what the bids came in at. Mr. Bushey said he agrees it is odd, he was thinking it would be right around \$110,000. He went to multiple companies who all said the abatement would be between \$6.50 and \$8.50 per foot. He can't speak to how they priced this, but the bid is for the more expensive method of shot blasting. He has not personally used this abatement company before but he did contact colleagues at the Connecticut School of Building and Grounds Association who had had used them before who said they have been very good with minimal change orders. He feels confident this is a good number.

Councilor Barry asked if the number includes an allowance for testing. Mr. Bushey answered yes.

Mayor Montinieri asked how they determined what was there; did they pull up the flooring or do a boring. Mr. Bushey said they did preliminary testing on the floor and did not just rely on the state-required asbestos report. They tested 7 different spots in the cafeteria and also the gymnasium.

Mayor Montinieri asked if the removal of the existing floor is part of this bid. Mr. Bushey answered yes it is part of the abatement. They will take the floor up with razor scrapers then a bead blaster will go over the floor to take up to 1/8 inch of concrete off, if needed (mostly needed in center court of the gym).

Mayor Montinieri asked what the start and completion date would be. Mr. Bushey said the start date is July 1st, upon approval, and abatement is listed for 17 days. He spoke with the flooring contractor and, upon issuing a purchase order, he will order the materials and be ready to go during the summer.

Councilor Manousos asked if the leaking window in the gym had been taking care of. Mr. Bushey answered yes and also a piece of the upper portion of the brick façade will be repointed. Council Rell asked if anyone from the DEEP or the State would be overseeing the abatement. Mr. Bushey answered no, that is not the norm. An independent contractor will do the environmental readings will be on sight while the abatement is being done. This contractor will report the readings to the State.

Council Rell asked if, after the 17 days of abatement, they will make sure there is no asbestos present. Mr. Bushey answered yes, after the abatement there will be air tests and wipe samples will be done. The school will be off limits to everyone during the abatement. Custodial staff will be on the other side of the building and the office staff will be able to move their office to

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another part of the building or can work at the Stillman building.

Councilor Rell said his concern is not the residue left over from the abatement, but that they will go down deep enough. Mr. Bushey said the air testing criteria is rather strict and the environmental hygienist is present during the abatement.

Councilor Barry asked if the testing is for asbestos only or if there will be testing for other materials. Mr. Bushey said the testing is for asbestos only. If this was a State or Federally funded job, other tests would be mandated, but because this job is being done with local CIP money, the State does not look at that. If anything is found on the floor, it will be encapsulated.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Martino moved to **“ACCEPT THE BID FROM BARTHOLOMEW COMPANY OF HARTFORD, CT FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF THE GYMNASIUM AND CAFETERIA FLOORING AT EMERSON WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR \$55,178.”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Mr. Bushey reported that there are 2 different styles of flooring: in the cafeteria there is 12x12 VCT tile with a border around the whole room. The gym/multipurpose room will get a rolled rubber floor with a 4.5 mm thickness.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

NONE

MINUTES

Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2015”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 4, 2015”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted. The motion passed 6-0-2. Councilor Roberts and Councilor Barry abstained.

Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 30, 2015”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

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Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 7, 2015”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, read from the Wall Street Journal that according to the census bureau Connecticut was one of 6 states that lost population in 2013-2014. Governor Malloy promised during re-election he would not raise taxes, but he is seeking \$650 million in tax hikes. but he also said this in 2010 and in 2011 he raised taxes by 2.6 billion to eliminate deficit. According to the Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis Connecticut grew .9% in 2013, the 10th worst in the U.S. The tax freedom day (finish paying the government each year) in Connecticut is May 13th, the latest in the nation. In private industry people are asked to do more with less, in Wethersfield people are doing less and getting paid more. Does not know how he will be able to afford the tax increases.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, stated that Connecticut is last on tax freedom day because of local and state government. The roads are not in good shape, electric bill, water and natural gas are increasing. He said that in our own town there is no responsibility and we get all the bills. Thinks the Charter Revision Commission came back with very little and it will do nothing to make our economy better. A 3.71% increase says a lot about the management in town when many towns around Wethersfield came in with much lower increase. Taxes take money out of the economy so we don't have money to spend.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, asked for clarification about the Charter hearing --we can recommend a change in wording but cannot add a point (e.g. if they wanted to add a budget referendum). Town Clerk Sassano said that is correct. The only way that could be done would be to defeat the referendum in November and then start over.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:54 p.m., Councilor Martino moved **"TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION"** seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 9:12 p.m. Councilor Martino moved **“TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Martino moved **“TO APPROVE THE PAYMENT OF \$30,961.89 TO TNT**

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ELECTRIC TO CLOSE OUT THE CONTRACT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONCRETE BASES FOR THE COTTONE FIELD LIGHTS. WITH MONIES FOR THE PAYMENT TO COME FROM THE REMAINING PROJECT FUNDS AND FUNDS IN THE FIELD RENTAL ACCOUNT.” seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:14 p.m. Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Martino.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk